

Mint won't seek coin slugs from foreign countries

By Roger Boye

An Illinois congressman is claiming success in efforts to assure that U.S. coinage continues to be made

"in America, by Americans."

Officials in the Treasury Department had asked foreign companies to submit bids to supply coin slugs to the Denver Mint. But Mint Director Donna K. Pope canceled the solicitation after complaints from Rep. Frank Annunzio [D., Ill.] and other congressmen.

"Our coins will not be labeled 'made in Taiwan,'" Annunzio said in a statement after the cancellation. "Coins of the realm must be made in the realm."

Annunzio, chairman of the House Subcommittee on Consumer Affairs and Coinage, had threatened to attach a "buy American" amendment to the mint's budget authorization if the solicitation were not withdrawn. During a committee hearing in April, Annunzio said the mint should buy coin slugs from domestic firms to protect jobs and to guarantee the integrity of the nation's money, according to reports in the hobby press.

Slugs are blank discs onto which mint workers impress the coin designs, creating "hard money."

● Uncle Sam's newest medal depicts Elie Wiesel, the novelist and teacher who had asked President Reagan to cancel his visit to the German military cemetery in Bitburg, West Germany.

The 1½-inch bronze specimens duplicate a Congressional gold medal that Reagan gave to Wiesel during White House ceremonies on April 19, just two weeks before Reagan's trip to Bitburg. Wiesel told the president during an emotional speech to "find another site . . . your place is with the victims of the SS."

Congress authorized production of the gold medal in recognition of Wiesel's work as a humanitarian and distinguished citizen. Wiesel was a child prisoner of Nazi death camps at Buchenwald and Auschwitz.

Still another new bronze medal honors Danny Thomas, the actor who founded St. Jude Children's Research Hospital in Memphis, Tenn. It, too, duplicates a Congressional gold medal that recognizes Thomas' humanitarian work.

Each bronze medal costs \$2.25. To order, send a check or money order to the United States Mint [Medals], P.O. Box 500, Philadelphia, Pa. 19105. The federal government has issued about 300 bronze medals since the 1860s.